

CCC Minutes Wednesday, November 29, 2023

7PM, 2nd Floor of the Town Offices and via Zoom

Members: Corey Fitch, Chair; Jody Schubert, Co-Chair; Linda Leone, Secretary; Reyer Jaarsma; Cindy Heath

Alt. Members: Julie Foote (zoom), Bob Taylor

Select Board: John Hammond

Absent: Robin Kilfeather-Mackey, Glenn Griffin

Guests: *Kate Buckman, Connecticut River Conservancy, kbuckman@ctriver.org, 603 931 2448; Jennifer Griffin, Great River Hydro.

***Another Resource@ CRC, not attending:** Kathy Urffer, River Steward, VT, kurffer@ctriver.org, 802 259 0413

1. Call to order: Corey called the meeting to order at 7pm.
2. [Kate Buckman, Connecticut River Conservancy - New Steward](#) / Corey. Kate Buckman, River Steward with the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC), discussed the status of the relicensing of the Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon hydro facilities. Relicensing is a process which will determine how they are operated and impact the river (and Cornish) for the next 40+ years. This is a once in a lifetime chance and local voices will make a difference in achieving improvements for a healthy and flourishing river for the next 50 years.

Corey introduced Kate who introduced Jennifer Griffin from Great River Hydro (GRH) that owns the Connecticut facilities. Great River Hydro was bought by Hydro-Quebec during relicensing which includes a large portfolio of dams in the US northeast.

Kate explained that her role is an advocacy role at CRC, she works in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut, and is responsible also for outreach and education. She said that slowing water flow (and leaving too much sediment above the dam and too little below) causes the largest ecological impacts of dam operation. Water quality is affected negatively, and oxygen is reduced. The relicensing process is ongoing on 5 dams, impacting 175 miles of river in New Hampshire and Vermont (14 towns in NH). It is anticipated that the renewed licensing may be about 40 years long. GRH has to mitigate impacts along the course of the dams, and she strongly encouraged towns to comment to the CRC.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issues licenses for all non-federal hydropower projects, Wilder, Bellows Falls and Vernon Dam licenses were last updated in 1979; relicensing may be applied for a term of about 40 years. Power and development, energy conservation, protection, mitigation and enhancement of fish and wildlife, and recreation are all among stakeholder values taken into consideration by FERC and GRH. There are reports and studies for each of these areas of impact that we should read and reference in any comments to FERC - the comments have to be relevant to the relicensing data. She encouraged a review of Exhibit G showing ownership or flowage rights of GRH; as well as Exhibit E and Table D-1 (GRH financial/recreation response).

She reviewed the Connecticut River relicensing history. Early 2024 both First Light (owner of GRH) and GRH have to provide information to FERC for an environmental assessment which triggers the next formal stakeholder comment period on the entire relicensing application. That is "our" opportunity to comment;

we have time to plan and submit to our Select Board for approval if appropriate. Once the comment period is announced (it is anticipated that it *may* be triggered in February 2024), there will be only 60 days for comment.

Hydro-peaking operational change: GRH dams hold back water, let it go and take advantage of the peak flow to generate power. GRH would be changing operating practice from hydro-peaking to inflow-equals-outflow; the modeling of inflow=outflow shows a much closer to a natural and stabilized flow. GRH is using this operational change to address the fish passage agreement and mitigation.

Kate suggested these issues to consider for comment: erosion, recreation, fish passage, cultural and historic resources. Kate will send a summary document linking subject matter in the application to Corey and he will distribute it to the members.

3. UpdateFollowing the Public Hearing of November 13, 2023 - Corey.
 - a. Review and Approval of [Draft Public Hearing Minutes 11-13-23](#). Jody moved that the minutes be approved, Linda seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.
 - i. Corey asked for a motion to approve a contribution of \$11,500 from the Conservation Fund to the Upper Valley Land Trust (UFLT) to defray expenses in the finalization of the Hooper easements (north and south) off of Hildreth Lane. Cindy moved to approve this motion; Jody seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and the members approved the motion unanimously.
 - ii. Approval of up to \$5,000 from the Conservation Fund to the UVLSRPC to fund a proposed map update project undertaken by the Commission to update the 2013 Natural Resource Inventory. Corey asked for a motion to approve the proposed funding; Reyer made a motion, Jody seconded the motion; there was no discussion. The members approved the motion unanimously.
 - iii. Documents [Hooper Easement Folder](#); [Map Proposal from UFLT](#). There was no discussion on this item.
4. Approve the [Draft CCC Minutes 10-25-23](#). Corey asked for a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. Jody moved that the minutes be approved as distributed. Cindy seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.
5. Treasurer's Report (Robin). Corey asked for a motion to move our operating budget remaining balance of \$292.96 to the Conservation Fund. Rickey motioned that this be approved; Reyer seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the members approved the motion unanimously.
6. Subcommittee Reports: [Subcommittee](#)
 - a. Land Conservation Plan
 - i. Jody prepared some numbers for conserved land in Cornish as well as Corbin Park.
 1. Around 16% of the land in Cornish is conserved, this includes both public and private lands.
 2. Corbin Park makes up around 14% of the land in Cornish. This land is not conserved or protected.
 - b. Town Water Protection Plan
 - c. Education Plan: Jody presented a [CCC Education Proposal for 2024](#).
 - d. Land Monitoring
 - i. Finalize White Swan Monitoring - this was finalized by Jody.
 - ii. Brian Meyette Monitoring - Reyer's planning to schedule this walk before the end of December and will advise.

- iii. Review All Monitoring Reports for 2023 - Jody, Linda, Rickey will meet 12/5/23 to conduct this review.
- 7. NRI Update: [Master Draft NRI 8-23-2023](#). Maps Workshop/Corey & Glenn ([Map Proposal from UVLT](#))
- 8. CCC Website - there was no update at this time.
- 9. Other Business
 - a. Don Snowden - Corey announced that a new contribution of \$500 has been received.
 - b. CCC Hats - Linda. No update at this time, awaiting samples.
 - c. Tree planting at Fairgrounds follow up/Bob. No update at this time.
 - d. [NHACC Annual Meeting](#) - No one attended.
 - e. Annual Agenda Items
 - i. Finalize CCC award choice and plan gifts. Corey suggested the CCC not give an award this year. He also suggested we decide on a consistent award to give awardees - he asked for suggestions for an award idea. Cindy suggested Jim Schubert might be willing to provide a painting. The group discussed CCC awardee candidates and will discuss further at the January meeting.
 - ii. Town Meeting Display Discussion/Decide on Topic.
 - 1. A suggestion was made to ask Kate Buckman if she would like to join our Table for Town Meeting.
 - iii. Share Draft of Town Report Page for CCC review/comment. Corey will draft this.
 - iv. Review and Approval of Warrant article for contribution to the Conservation Fund and Prepare Annual Budget: [Draft Warrant Article Request for CCC 2024 Funding](#). Corey asked for a motion for approval. Rickey motioned that the warrant be approved as written. Jody seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the article was approved as written.
 - v. Conservation Notes update - nothing further.
 - vi. Finalize Annual Budget - no discussion.
 - vii. Annual review of the Bylaws - no discussion.
 - f. Reimbursements
 - i. Linda - \$60 for NHACC conf. - from Palmer Fund. Linda canceled her attendance; reimbursement was not required or paid.
 - g. Map meeting Wednesday January 10, 2024, 6pm at the Town Offices
 - h. Next CCC meeting Wednesday January 24, 2024, 7pm at the Town Offices.
- 10. Adjournment at 9:05pm.